

REVERSED PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY:

LEARNING & TEACHING IN PROFESSIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION (PHE)

Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Hoża 20, Warsaw, Poland, March 8, 2019

THE EMERGING CHALLENGES OF PROFESSIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION IN POLAND

Conclusions overview

Introduction

A reversed peer learning activity on Learning and Teaching in Professional Higher Education (PHE) was organised jointly by EURASHE, European representation of PHE and its Polish member, the Conference of Rectors of State Schools of Higher Vocational Education in Poland (KRePUZ) in Warsaw on March 8, 2019 at the premises of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The event brought together 27 representatives of academics, students, employers and policy experts from Poland and other European countries including 5 national and 3 international experts who contributed to the interactive discussions. Reflecting the Polish hosts request the event focused on *learning and teaching agenda within professional higher education* with emphasis on the following issues:

- Future challenges of the labour market
- Digitalisation and digital transformation of PHE institutions
- Integration of academic and profession-oriented elements into programmes of PHE, learning outcomes and transversal skills and competences
- Learning methodology supporting professional character, work-based learning elements and links between students' learning and research activities

Summary of conclusions

The event built upon introductory presentations of Polish experts and responses of international experts. The following group and plenary discussions resulted in the following list of key conclusions relevant for Polish, yet also wider European development:

- 1) The PHE institutions should keep their **distinct mission and vision** in order to serve the key purpose, yet are invited to rethink its scope and focus reflecting the changing environment and target groups.
- 2) There is a clear trend to enhance the **access to higher education** to various non-traditional groups of learners, learners from various disadvantaged background, yet also to adult learners seeking for update or change of their qualification in response to changing labour

market developments. PHE institutions are in a position to address many of these groups and respect their different learning needs and pathways. The Polish example of distribution of Higher Vocational Schools in smaller regional centres plays an important positive role in enhancing access to higher education within these communities.

- 3) A substantial part of the PHE profile and mission should include **work-based learning**, apprenticeships/students' placements, as well as various opportunities for **life-long learning**; this development has to be reflected in the funding model and its incentives. However, the practical learning elements should be quality assured, relevant for students' personal and professional development and learning. Some general **standards and principles** for work-based learning provisions within a framework of existing standards for quality in higher education would be helpful.
- 4) There is a growing attention to be paid to **innovation in learning and teaching**, relevant qualification and profile of academic staff and support of PHE institutions and their staff in development of relevant approaches to learning and assessment of students' achievements. Considering the PHE profile and values emphasis on work-related experience should be guiding principle. Engagement of **stakeholders from the world of work** in different stages of the programme life cycle (design, accreditation, delivery, evaluation...) is a requirement for professionally-oriented education.
- 5) The **profile of academic staff** within PHE should reflect the mission and values within the sector, invite a wider range of staff with a sound and relevant **background in the world of work**. It was clearly stated that it might be too restrictive to fix any detailed regulation regarding proportion or profile of such lecturers within the academic staff, yet the specific of the PHE, as well as of the particular field should be respected.
- 6) While focusing on professional development of students PHE has to address at the same time their **social competences** and contribute to their **personal development and active civic** attitudes. PHE can't be driven only by the labour market developments, the wider social context, as well as a space for personal growth and development are crucial mission of higher education.
- 7) Digitalisation is likely to bring substantial changes in access, content, organisation and delivery of higher education. However, there is a belief in a need of balancing technology with social and human contact resulting in effective blended learning provisions. Each institution is invited to consider their digitalisation strategy and engagement in partnerships. At the moment the crucial attention should be paid to raising awareness of the technologies' potential, more systemic and engaging information sharing, mutual exploration of opportunities and development of capacities to utilise digital technologies within the changing environment.

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This is a draft document, more detailed report to be available soon